

June 23, 1986

TALKING POINTS ON HAITI
IMPLICATIONS OF FOOD SHORTAGES AND VIOLENCE

Widespread hunger and extreme poverty have been characteristic of Haiti for decades.

- Under the Duvaliers, impoverished individuals generally accepted their conditions or attempted to emigrate to the US.
- With Duvalier's ouster, however, the poor no longer fear retribution and are increasingly demanding food and employment. On occasion, expression of these demands has led to violence.

The ruling council is moving to stabilize the economy and revitalize business confidence.

- The government recently concluded preliminary negotiations with the IMF for a \$21 million three-year Structural Adjustment Facility that could be in place by late September.
- The ruling council recently established new commissions and issued regulations to handle labor disputes and encourage investment.

Even so the effects of the government's actions, will not be noticeable in the short term.

- The lack of visible progress, particularly in the availability of food and jobs, is a principal reason insignificant issues can quickly cause widespread unrest.

Embassy contacts uniformly report that crime has increased at an alarming rate since February.

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- Economic distress has forced some people to resort to criminal activity to survive.
- The release of several hundred prisoners by former Minister of Justice Gerard Gourgue in April resulted in many hardened criminals returning to the streets.
- The return of street tough expatriates from New York, Miami, and other US cities introduced another lawless element into the equation.

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[REDACTED]

The Haitian government is aware of the political threat that hunger, poverty, and increasing crime pose, but does not have the resources to remedy the situation.

-- [REDACTED] the government is unable to provide jobs, or financial assistance to the poor, and must depend on foreign aid for relief. 25X1

-- A large quantity of wheat arrived from the US in late May, but [REDACTED] transportation and distribution were delayed because most of the Army's vehicles were in poor state of repair. 25X1

Although surface calm currently prevails, Haitian cities remain tinderboxes ready to explode.

-- [REDACTED] the latest unrest in the extremely depressed city of Gonaives was the product of the unemployment, poverty, boredom, and hunger that is rampant and particularly acute there. 25X1

-- Because Gonaives is the city where independence was proclaimed in 1804 and where the movement to oust Duvalier began last year, conditions there have a special political significance: Haitians nationwide look to Gonaives for political guidance and inspiration.

[REDACTED] the inhabitants of Port-au-Prince's sprawling slum areas are the most volatile segment of the capital's population. 25X1

Leftist agitators frequently are taking advantage of the situation to turn minor disputes into protests against the government and, on occasion the US.

-- Individuals frustrated by economic difficulties are becoming increasingly susceptible to propaganda that the U.S. is at fault for Haiti's current condition.

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